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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

1. **The Chairperson** said that the Millennium Summit had identified various challenges confronting the international community: respect for the dignity and worth of the human person and for human rights, gender equality and freedom from want and fear. The simple goals of good health and a happy family life were unattainable for many people because of poverty and its attendant evils, including unemployment, conflict, lack of respect for human rights and discrimination on grounds of race or gender. The plight of such people, languishing in unacceptable social conditions and untouched by scientific and technological progress, was an unhappy legacy of the twentieth century. The twenty-first century should do better by ensuring a life of dignity for all.

Election of officers

2. **The Chairperson** said that Ms. Hazel de Wet (Namibia) and Mr. Mostafa Alaie (Islamic Republic of Iran) had been nominated by the Group of African States and the Group of Asian States respectively for the two remaining posts of Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, while Ms. Anzhela Korneliouk (Belarus) had been nominated by the Group of Eastern European States for the post of Rapporteur. In the absence of further nominations, she took it that the Committee wished to elect them by acclamation.

3. *Ms. de Wet (Namibia), Mr. Alaie (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Ms. Korneliouk (Belarus) were elected by acclamation.*

4. **Mr. Desai** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the current session of the General Assembly was being held in the afterglow of the highly successful Millennium Summit. It was up to the Third Committee to preserve the momentum generated by the Summit, with its focus on strengthening the United Nations to enable it to respond more effectively to new challenges.

5. One theme that had been extensively discussed in recent months was globalization. Not only had it figured prominently at the Millennium Summit and in the Beijing+5 process, but it had also been a focus of concern for many non-governmental groups, including activist groups, and it was relevant to the entire agenda of the Third Committee. The Committee had played a pioneering role, in that many of the concerns currently being expressed about the consequences of globalization had been articulated in its debates leading up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. It was noteworthy that the reaction to globalization processes such as commercial and financial integration was itself an aspect of globalization. It was the mechanics of globalization that had made it possible to identify mechanisms and political processes for addressing the concerns that globalization aroused.

6. Of those concerns, several were directly relevant to the Committee's work. First and foremost, globalization tended to increase inequalities among and within countries. Secondly, although globalization had done much to expand the global economy and raise living standards, 1.3 billion people still lived on less than a dollar a day, a situation which was becoming increasingly unacceptable. Thirdly, inequality and the persistence of poverty and unemployment, especially youth unemployment, translated into social stress and breakdown. A fourth, and related, concern was how to manage globalization, since it seemed to be beyond the control of national Governments and international organizations. Developments such as the shift of influence from the public to the private sector seemed to point to a governance deficit and, more importantly, a democratic deficit. Since the mechanisms of globalized trade, finance and technology, among others, were seen as less than fully democratic, there had been public responses such as street demonstrations.

7. Against that backdrop, the Millennium Summit had focused on the potential of the United Nations to act as an effective instrument for addressing the problem. The Organization had been ahead of its time on such issues as the need to integrate the social and economic dimensions. As a democratic institution that had long been concerned with the social and environmental issues that had now come to the fore, it was a credible forum for their discussion and was well placed to identify the kind of political processes that were needed to manage globalization.

Agenda item 103: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/55/3, A/55/74, A/55/139-E/2000/93, A/55/167, A/55/257-S/2000/766; A/C.3/55/L.2; E/2000/9)

Agenda item 104: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons (A/55/167, A/55/257-S/2000/766)

8. **Mr. Langmore** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development) introduced document E/2000/9, containing an overview of the *2000 Report on the World Social Situation*. The full report would be issued later in the year as a United Nations sales publication. It was divided into six chapters. Chapter I covered such issues as population, ageing, the slowing of the rate of world population growth and changes in population structure. It also discussed production, noting that while per capita income had grown faster in developing countries than in developed countries during the 1990s, that growth had been very uneven. Chapter II dealt with changes in family structure, the growing reports of violence in family life and in the community, changes in the role of women, aspects of the situation of children and youth, the growth in the numbers of older people, the extent of disability and changes in the functioning of government. Chapter III discussed the social situation in different regions, particularly in relation to unemployment, increasingly unequal income distribution, hunger, housing and health, including safe water and sanitation. Chapter IV dealt with the issues of armed conflict, crime, the criminalization of violence, the increase in trafficking in women, corruption and various aspects of the Internet, including its potential for criminal misuse. Chapter V discussed continuing inequities in the provision of basic education and secondary and technical education and inequities in the information revolution. The final chapter raised a number of important questions and issues, without attempting to answer or resolve them. The issues included globalization, its social dimensions and its impact on equity; changing views of the role of government in promoting the common good; the shift from non-market to market approaches in meeting social needs; the shifting boundary between the public and private domains; and developments in biomedical sciences and their impact on the future shape of populations and societies.

9. **Mr. Sidorenko** (Chief, United Nations Programme on Ageing) introduced document A/55/167, containing the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly had adopted two closely linked resolutions — 54/24 and 54/262 — which provided a bridge between the International Year of Older Persons and the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid in 2002. The report highlighted the latest developments in the implementation of the two resolutions. Chapter II dealt with the four dimensions of the conceptual framework of the International Year, namely, the situation of older persons, lifelong individual development, multigenerational relationships and the interplay between population ageing and development, while chapter III highlighted several initiatives taken by the Secretariat in support of policy development for a society for all ages: in February 2000, an Internet-based database on policies and programmes on ageing had been established with the support of the Government of the Netherlands; the United Nations programme on ageing was working with the International Association of Gerontology on the future research agenda on ageing, with support from the Government of Germany; and, lastly, the first international conference on rural ageing had been held in conjunction with the University of West Virginia in June 2000. Chapter IV reported on preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which included a review of progress in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing. A questionnaire on the subject had been circulated to Member States and the response had been very gratifying. The results would be presented to the thirty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development to be held in 2001.

10. The Secretary-General had established a Technical Committee to advise him on preparations for the Second World Assembly. The Committee had held its first meeting in Frankfurt in June 2000, with financial support from the Government of Germany. A second meeting was to be held in October 2000 in the Dominican Republic, with financial support from the Government of Spain, and the Government of Austria had indicated that, if necessary, it would sponsor and host a third meeting in 2001.

11. **Mr. Monod-Gayraud** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, agreed that one of the

most significant outcomes of the International Year of Older Persons had been the decision to hold a Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in April 2002, which would permit the adoption of a revised International Plan of Action on Ageing and of a long-term strategy on ageing. The celebration of the Year had served to raise political and public awareness about issues of concern to older persons and had generated numerous projects and activities aimed at improving their living conditions and increasing their participation and integration in society.

12. The European Union endorsed the four-dimensional conceptual framework comprising the situation of older persons, lifelong individual development, multigenerational relationships and the interplay between population ageing and development.

13. Commenting on initiatives designed to provide a sustained policy response to population and individual ageing, he said that, with growing recognition of the very important role which older persons could play as volunteers, further initiatives would undoubtedly be launched during the International Year of Volunteers in 2001.

14. The European Union would participate actively in the important process of revising the Plan of Action and developing a long-term strategy on ageing. The two sessions of the Commission for Social Development, acting as the preparatory committee for the World Assembly, would provide an excellent forum for discussion and for the exchange of experiences and best practices. The European Union hoped that, in accordance with established practice, the preparatory process would include not only governments but also United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations, social partners and research centres.

15. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal), reiterating the need to preserve the momentum generated by the International Year of Older Persons, said that progress in the area of social development still fell far short of current needs and could not conceal the major constraints facing the most vulnerable sectors of society.

16. His delegation welcomed the increasing importance attached by the United Nations to questions relating to ageing and to the promotion of a gender-specific approach. Greater attention should be paid to the constraints felt by developing countries, particularly in Africa, where life expectancy was declining as a result of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, armed conflict, deteriorating economic and social conditions and increasing poverty. In that regard, a more in-depth study on ageing in Africa should be conducted and an updated African database including demographic and socio-economic data should be created in preparation for the Second World Assembly.

17. Turning to the overview of the *2000 Report on the World Social Situation* (E/2000/9), he welcomed the report's emphasis on, inter alia, the declining role of the family as an economic unit of production; long-term unemployment; hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty; and the health situation. He stressed the continued urgency of providing universal education, assistance to disabled persons, development assistance, debt relief and market access, and of reversing the adverse effects of globalization on developing countries.

18. His Government was committed to combating poverty, youth unemployment and illiteracy. It had launched a vast national recovery programme to tackle poverty, endemic diseases, infant, child and maternal mortality, low school attendance rates among girls and marginalization of women. Numerous initiatives had been launched to provide education, training and jobs for young people and to involve them in local development projects. In that context, he drew attention to the preparations for the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, to be held in Dakar in 2001, and urged all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and all bilateral and multilateral development partners to support the preparatory process.

19. **Mr. Carp** (United States of America) said that the membership of the United States Federal Committee for the International Year of Older Persons continued to grow, as it came to be recognized as a forum for sharing information about ageing issues and a vehicle for developing a comprehensive federal response to ageing.

20. A recent report on ageing, issued by the Federal Interagency Forum on Ageing-Related Statistics, contrasted the overall advances made by older Americans with persistent inequalities between the sexes and among income and ethnic groups in the United States. His Government was committed to

meeting the health and financial needs of older Americans and had proposed several initiatives to improve the quality of life of older Americans and their caregivers, including affordable prescription drugs and assistance with financing long-term care.

21. His delegation hoped that United Nations bodies and Member States would make full use of the International Year of Volunteers to highlight the contributions of older persons to society. Lastly, his Government looked forward to working with other Governments in preparing for the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

22. **Mr. Amoros Núñez** (Cuba) said that the *2000 Report on the World Social Situation* echoed the Millennium Summit in highlighting the growing inequities and disparities between developing and industrialized countries as a result of globalization. The 1.3 billion people living in poverty in the third world were very far from achieving social development: poverty and unemployment were on the rise, health and nutrition indicators were falling and progress in education was at a standstill. At the same time, official development assistance was declining, markets were on the verge of yet another crisis as a result of speculative financial movements and structural adjustment policies were wreaking havoc in many developing countries. It was high time that economic models were judged by their potential to promote social development on a basis of social justice and equity.

23. In Cuba, just and equitable distribution of wealth had made it possible to satisfy the basic health, education, employment and cultural development needs of the entire population. Cuba accorded high priority to the all-round development of young people and had been working to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond both nationally and internationally. It looked forward to the next session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, to be held in Dakar, Senegal, and trusted that the next World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth would be held shortly to follow up the commitments made at the 1998 Lisbon Conference. Young people played a significant role in the economic, political and social life of Cuba, as was evidenced by their presence in Parliament, in government structures and in all economic and social sectors.

24. Older persons in Cuba were guaranteed universal free coverage of medical and hospital expenses, as well as social security. As a result, life expectancy at birth had increased to 75 years. His Government was carrying out programmes to improve health and social welfare indicators for older persons, including the "Grandparents' Circles" initiative, under which social activities were organized for over 150,000 older persons to facilitate their interaction with the community. His delegation welcomed the convening of the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, which should, in addition to its stated objectives, consider the urgency of ensuring that the boom in the elderly population extended to most developing countries as well.

25. Cuba's initiatives for disabled persons ranged from supporting their organizations to carrying out activities in the areas of health, education, employment, culture and the arts, and sports. A strong special education programme ensured that 85 per cent of disabled children were enrolled in school, while thousands of disabled persons were given employment as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation programme. The Cuban experience demonstrated the power of humanism to promote social development, even in the face of the embargo, or rather economic war, unilaterally imposed on Cuba by the United States of America.

26. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) stressed the importance of implementing the goals of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Declaration. Effective poverty eradication in which the poor played an active role would be central to that process. In Bangladesh, under a comprehensive anti-poverty initiative for homeless families, the effective use of microcredit to provide shelter and a livelihood had been combined with the provision of health care, education, nutrition, family welfare services and community development. Greater involvement of women in decision-making, particularly at the local level, would also be crucial. In Bangladesh, over 14,000 women had been directly elected to local councils under a recent provision, resulting in more gender-sensitive policy-making, resource allocation and programme execution. Enhancing social safety nets by supporting traditional and community institutions that cared for the vulnerable, as well as newer initiatives that might otherwise fall prey to structural adjustment was equally crucial. It would also be an

effective way of following up the International Year of Older Persons. Other key factors in implementing the goals of the twenty-fourth special session and the Millennium Declaration would be the participation of civil society and the private sector, working in partnership with strong States that promoted democracy and good governance. Lastly, international cooperation was essential in order to transfer resources, knowledge and capacity to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and African countries. The commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and at the twenty-fourth special session would have to be reiterated at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2001.

27. In conclusion, the United Nations must step up its efforts to promote social development by ensuring a coordinated and integrated follow-up to all the major global conferences of the 1990s and by enhancing the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council and its commissions, particularly the Commission for Social Development.

28. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that his country, having suffered a huge loss of human resources, including skilled professionals, in the 1994 genocide, had been attempting to use information technology as a substitute for manpower in its development efforts. The Government of National Unity, having restored peace and security throughout the country, was committed to increasing the allocation of resources to the social sector, safeguarding social spending in the national budget and closely monitoring social sector performance. The Government's priorities included universal access to primary health care; universal primary education by 2005; access to clean water; the elimination of discriminatory laws barring women's access to education, employment, land and credit; and support for efforts to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was also implementing programmes for disabled persons and for young people, including vocational courses in mechanical engineering and computer sciences for young people who were not enrolled in universities.

29. However, government resources alone could not cover the entire cost of the programmes and projects needed to improve the living conditions of Rwanda's population. Moreover, the construction efforts were being hampered by debt problems. His delegation was heartened by Canada's call on creditor countries and international financial institutions to impose a debt moratorium for the poorest nations. It appealed to Rwanda's creditors to cancel its debts so that its limited resources could go to post-conflict building, research and social development.

30. **Mr. Ophaug** (Norway), speaking as Norway's youth delegate to the current session of the General Assembly and as a representative of the Norwegian Youth Council, stressed that primary education was not just a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration, but also an important factor in development. Noting that 130 million children in developing countries had no access to primary education, he urged Member States to promote elementary education for all and to take appropriate action to reduce school drop-out rates, particularly among girls, using the Dakar Framework for Action as a guideline. In the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, children and young people must be made aware of their rights and young people must be included in decision-making processes that affected their lives.

31. He welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the involvement of children in armed conflict and the draft optional protocol related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and urged all States to sign and ratify them as soon as possible.

32. Young people from some of the world's conflict areas had gathered recently in Norway at the International Peace Summer School, where they had had an opportunity to meet and discuss with people whom they usually regarded as their enemies. The event, which had been co-funded by the Government of Norway and organized by the Norwegian Youth Council, the Nansen Academy and the National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), had been a huge success and follow-up meetings were planned in the Balkans, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Norway. He recommended that other Governments sponsor such forums at which young people could engage in a dialogue about how to create a peaceful future. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that Governments would include children and young people in their delegations to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the

World Summit for Children and, in general, make it possible for more youth delegates to participate in United Nations meetings.

Other matters

33. **The Chairperson** announced that she had delivered a tribute at the memorial service held the previous week for Ms. Virginia Sauerwein, who had been actively involved in the social issues before the Third Committee and had played a key role in drafting the resolution on women's access to credit during the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City in 1975.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.